

# CULTURE AND THE CRISIS

AN OPEN LETTER TO THE  
WRITERS • ARTISTS • TEACHERS  
PHYSICIANS • ENGINEERS • SCIENTISTS  
AND OTHER PROFESSIONAL WORKERS  
OF AMERICA

*LEAGUE OF PROFESSIONAL GROUPS  
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## P R E F A C E

We of this generation stand midway between two eras. When we look backward, we see our American past like a great tidal wave that is now receding, but that was magnificent indeed in the sweep of its socially purposeless power. When we look ahead, we see something new and strange, undreamed of in the American philosophy. What we see ahead is the threat of cultural dissolution. The great wave piled up too much wreckage—of nature, of obsolete social patterns and institutions, of human blood and nerve.

We who write this, listed among the so-called "intellectuals" of our generation, people trained, at least, to think for ourselves and hence, to a degree for our time and our people—we have no faintest desire to exaggerate either our talents or our influence. Yet on the other hand, we are not humble, especially with respect to the power that measures itself in dollar signs and ciphers, the thought that is not thought, but merely the stereotype of habit, the action that is not will, not choice, but the reflex of fear. Why should we as a class be humble? Practically everything that is orderly and sane and useful in America was made by two classes of Americans; our class, the class of brain workers, and the "lower classes", the muscle workers. Very well, we strike hands with our true comrades. We claim our own and we reject the disorder, the lunacy spawned by grabbers, advertisers, traders, speculators, salesmen, the much-adulated, immensely stupid and irresponsible "business men". We claim the right to live and to function. It is our business to think and we shall not permit business men to teach us our business. It is also, in the end, our business to act.

We have acted. As responsible intellectual workers we have aligned ourselves with the frankly revolutionary Communist Party, the party of the workers. In this letter, we speak to you of our own class—to the writers, artists, scientists, teachers, engineers, to all honest professional workers—telling you as best we can why we have made this decision and why we think that you too should support the Communist Party in the political campaign now under way.

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## *An Open Letter to the Intellectual Workers of America.*

There is only one issue in the present election. Call it hard times, unemployment, the farm problem, the world crisis, or call it simply hunger—whatever name we use, the issue is the same. What do the major political parties propose to do about it?

The Republicans propose, in effect, to do nothing whatever. Twelve to fifteen million men and women have lost their jobs; twenty-five to thirty-five million people will go hungry this winter; nobody knows the exact figures. The Republican Party, three years after the crash, does not even promise to take a census of our misery. The best its candidate can offer is a pledge to continue the policies which are depriving these millions of work, food and shelter.

Somebody must pay the cost of the depression: will it be the rich or the poor, the capitalists or the workers and farmers? In the battle now raging between them, the Republican administration has taken the side of the rich. To banks, railroads and industrial corporations, it has offered government loans, millions, billions, anything to keep them from going bankrupt. To the Rockefellers and Mellons it has offered a pledge to keep their taxes down—by discharging government employees and refusing government help to the unemployed. It offers nothing to the poor except higher taxes, lower wages and the chance to share their misery. If they ask for more, it gives them bayonets and tear-gas.

The Democrats, in the present election, have tried to appeal to both sides. Their candidate has promised as much as he safely could to as many people as he thought were influential. He has promised progressivism to progressives and conservatism to conservatives. He has promised to lower the price of electric power without lowering the inflated value of power company stock. He has promised more and less regu-

lation of the railroads. He has promised to lower the protective tariff and at the same time make it more protective. He has promised higher prices to the farmers by means of a measure which cannot be put into effect until hundreds of thousands of farms have been sold for taxes and mortgages. He has promised beer to industrial workers, if they have the money to buy it. On the one real issue he promises nothing.

If Roosevelt is elected—and Wall Street expects him to win—there will be changes here and there in the machine of government. The leaks in the boiler will be stuffed with cotton waste, the broken bolts mended with hay wire. A different gang of engineers will run the machine for the profit of the same owners.

The causes of the crisis will be untouched. The results of the crisis—hunger, low wages, unemployment—will still be with us. If there is a temporary return to a limited degree of prosperity, it can only be succeeded by another crisis. The United States under capitalism is like a house that is rotting away; the roof leaks, the sills and rafters are crumbling. The Democrats want to paint it pink. The Republicans don't want to paint it; instead they want to raise the rent.

### THE NATURE OF THE CRISIS

The economic crisis of 1929-1932 has been likened to a world war. There is indeed little to choose between the one and the other; both display the same barbarities, destructions, dislocations of human masses.

Like the imperialist war of 1914-18 the economic disaster was long overdue. It sprang from the same deep-rooted causes; the instability, the disorder chronic in capitalist society, ruled alternately by greed and fear, by the desire to expand, at enormous profit, or to protect itself at enormous loss; to speculate and exploit. The crisis, too, came as the sequel to a period of uncontrolled expanding, profit-making and competing. And as the peace which followed the war was stamped with the passions of the warring forces, nourishing all the germs of new wars, so the attempted solution of peace after the crisis is conceived in the limitations, the hypocrisies and exploitations of those same elements which produce world-wide economic catastrophe; it would furnish the setting only for new disasters.

This crisis in its characteristic aspects is similar to previous depressions, a recurrent and inescapable feature of capitalist society, although this one is more catastrophic than its predecessors. The causes are rooted in the economics of capitalist production. The "prosperity"

which comes after depression generates its own collapse. Real wages rose somewhat in 1922-23, but were thereafter comparatively stationary, limiting mass purchasing power, while the farmers' income was disastrously reduced by the agricultural crisis. Corporate profits, on the contrary, rose enormously. There was a 100% rise in the concentration of income, stimulating unnecessary investment and speculation. Capital flowed into old and new industries; and while this helped prosperity by increasing the production of capital goods, it ultimately undermined prosperity itself. Excess plant capacity multiplied and aggravated competition (the "new" competition). Speculation broke loose on an unprecedented scale, capitalizing the labor of our people. Underlying these developments was the increase of 1,500,000 in unemployed workers due to the accelerated introduction of technological improvements and labor-saving devices. Investors, bankers, producers, speculators—all were dominated merely by the urge for larger and larger profits. There was no ordered economic plan, no social direction of industry, only the exploitation which is the characteristic of capitalist production. Inevitably the precarious equilibrium which is capitalist prosperity was upset.

But this crisis is characterized by other than the usual cyclical features. In the past, depressions were followed by prosperity on a larger scale, because of undeveloped forces within capitalism—the expansion of home and foreign markets and the growth of new industries. In the United States the undeveloped lands out west were an additional stimulus to expansion. But these lands are no more, there are no new industries in sight, home markets are saturated, and the competition for foreign markets is enormously aggravated. The decline of capitalism, which has tormented Europe since the World War, is now also an American phenomenon. American capitalism has plunged into imperialism, and imperialism marks the decay and decline of capitalism. This decay and decline is primary cause of the unprecedented severity and duration of the depression, and it projects the prospects of successively more violent cyclical collapses. The nature of this crisis (which is worldwide) is characterized by the fact that it occurs in the midst of the break-down of capitalist society.

#### THE LOGIC OF CAPITALISM

The value of the debacle of 1929, to all thinking persons, must have been that it revealed, as in a lightning-flash, the fatal character of the

post-war society. The equilibrium of this society was false; its rotten foundations had been changed in no way. Outside of Soviet Russia, nearly all human services were still administered through the profit-seeking of capitalists. From this condition arose the contradictions, the frauds and imbecilities which became so apparent after the coming of depression.

Our industrialists and bankers, for all their patriotic promises to continue the New Era, to maintain "high wages" (which had been practically stationary from 1923 to 1929), began at once a work of ruthless deflation. They discharged labor, lowered wages, speeded up operations. It was a vast work of hoarding which they had begun, a hoarding of which they accused the masses of people. With one hand they opened charity "drives" or conducted "block-aid" campaigns, but with the other they hoarded. And the left hand could not withstand the destructive labors of the right hand. The workers and professionals have been forced to pay for relief of the unemployed.

The prosperity spree of bankers had over-capitalized our industries, added productive power beyond people's buying capacity to already over-extended enterprises. To save the banks, the government revenues were to be raised by means of taxation, further reducing the national buying power. Thus, capital, after years of profiteering and speculation, exacted prodigal doles for itself while opposing the "dole" (unemployment insurance) for the workers and other forms of adequate relief for professionals, workers and farmers.

To a dispassionate scrutiny the statesmanship of the depression, in government and big business, seems like the random movements of lunacy; yet such a course as we have watched, such reasoning as we have been able to distinguish, represents the "logic" of capitalism.

#### SERFS AND VAGABONDS

After three years the flag is still at half mast, the economic activities of the country are at a rate of approximately 50 per cent of capacity. Our heavy industries are almost motionless; the giant steel plants, the magnificent motor factories, such as those of Ford, are shut down in great part. Our means of production, efficient enough to sustain all of us in comfort, function at half-pressure or rust away. Whole regions seem devastated as if by a plague or a war; whole industries on which millions depend seem permanently blighted. Thus the farming population, the largest and most conservative section of the country, has

been driven to violence, after deepening poverty of many years standing. They have too much food to sell in a country whose masses are hungry. Though their produce is fearfully needed, it may not be sold save at terms which drive them from the land. In addition to 12,000,000 or 15,000,000 unemployed workers, other millions are employed only part time. One of the most tragic aspects of the capitalist-made depression are the 300,000 children who, according to government reports, are completely homeless, wandering to and fro.

At a given day in 1931 the heads of several great industrial corporations, such as the United States Steel, the General Motors, the Standard Oil, in concert announced universal wage-cuts for all their workers, of 10 to 20 per cent. (Soon afterward the railroads and many other industries followed their example.) By this command most of the 40,000,000 workers in this country had their earnings and their standard of living deeply altered. And we saw at once what oppressive power a few men exercised; and how the mass of workers, largely unorganized—the conservative labor unions dare not strike back at any rate—were literally returned to serfdom. Unable to control their own destiny they became simply the army of slave-labor which capital requires.

But a great part of the army of workers were totally deprived, by the same command, of the means of living. Some of them grouped as army veterans or starving miners participated in mass uprisings or hunger riots. Many of them began to wander about hopelessly, on freight-cars or cast-off automobiles.

"Hooverville", the new No Man's Land of tin and paper covered shanties, located along the fringes of civilization, by the freight yards or ports of cities, now became the transitory gathering place of the unemployed. "Hooverville", monument to the depression, is incredible; yet, in the long run, given our present conditions and philosophy, "Hooverville" must grow larger. The future, more and more, is bound up with "Hooverville" as new classes of the population steadily fall under the system of depression.

#### THE PROFESSIONALS SUFFER TOO

The brain workers who give technical or educational services are not spared from misfortune. As an illuminating instance of the experience of this middle class, we need only look at the political-financial chaos which has come to such an urban center as Chicago. Here, the

school teachers had, up to recently, received only five months pay out of the previous thirteen months. Two thousand of them had lost their savings in bank failures. Yet at one moment the city government undertook to sell for tax defaults the houses of its employees, unable to pay their taxes, because of the city's own default in wages!

In New York City alone there are about 8,000 unemployed teachers. The American Association of University Professors has revealed that a nation-wide drive of wage-cuts and lay-offs is on. By closing classes for adults, cutting the school year and doubling the size of classes, the rulers of the educational system throw increasing numbers of teachers out of work. In one New Jersey town, more than 100 white collar workers have turned to ditch-digging, competing with underpaid workers for their jobs. Dean Williamson of the Columbia University School of Library Service has declared that students must be barred since there are already "too many" librarians. Last June, the New York City school system had to eliminate 85 per cent of its architects, engineers and draftsmen. The New York City Chemists Club reports large numbers of trained chemists out of work. The head of the Medical Society of New York State, reports that doctors have taken to taxi driving and similar jobs to keep alive. The Dental Association reports that its members average 25 per cent of their incomes of three years ago. An Engineering School opened free graduate courses for unemployed Alumni. The Journalism College Dean reports that there are as many students as jobs, and the jobs are already filled to overflowing. Theatres close while actors and playwrights starve. Musicians suffer not only from the crisis but permanently from technological unemployment through the development of radio, talking-movies and the like. Artists find no market for their wares. Writers find no publishers, or must accept miserable terms, and then can count upon only a most limited sale of books. Even those business posts which require some technical training have become scarce. The personnel managers of the great trusts no longer comb the colleges for bright seniors whom they will set on a royal road to riches. Department stores have their pick of Ph. D.'s at \$12.00 a week. Anxious employers seek to stem the flood of trained applicants for jobs. Professor F. W. Taussig and C. S. Joslyn of Harvard have shown that business leadership is in the hands of a caste, selected by birth and connections, and Professor A. B. Crawford and S. N. Clement of Yale have armed employers with a plan to further bar the way to jobs by instituting an "internship"

for business. And down at the bottom, scores of thousands of students struggle through college barely able to keep alive, since adults have taken away their part-time jobs, and wonder what they will do when they graduate. All this unemployment and misery, all this training and talent thrown away, not because there are too many doctors, teachers, artists, writers and the like, but despite the fact that this country has never yet been able to provide its population with a sufficiently large body of trained intellectuals and professionals to satisfy its cultural needs. This cultural crisis of course grows directly out of the economic crisis.

#### TOMORROW'S CRISIS

Turn whichever way we will, we cannot escape from the conclusion that the crisis is being managed by those who produced the crisis. They would "deflate" labor and agriculture; but they would preserve the inflation of their own capital by looting the government treasury at the cost of the people at large. To increase the rate of business activity, they seek directly to expand credit, through the central banking system, so that speculation may increase—the same speculation and heedless profiteering which contributed enormously to the present crisis. But the excesses of such a movement will inevitably generate a new depression. Will it be like this one? Smaller or greater? Greater, one is forced to assume, in the long run.

The technologists of capital have not been sleeping during these lean years. They introduce daily new means of mechanization which dispense still further with labor. A new business revival, if it is at all possible, must be brought about in the presence of a larger standing army or paupers than before. The sharing of work, in the form of part-time employment, will be organized so that poverty may be general. Thus the historic cycle continues; the pressure of surplus populations laboring at a subsistence level increases. But this condition may be relieved at almost any moment by a favorite expedient: the adventure of imperialist war.

#### THE REPUBLICAN PARTY

Before and throughout this crisis, the Republican Party has controlled the Federal Government. It has not only been unable to create or maintain "prosperity", but has been interested solely in protecting privileged groups by shifting burdens to workers, farmers and professionals

President Hoover has attacked proposals of government unemployment relief as proposals for "doles". He has set up a charity organization which, when not aiding in fighting strikers and radicalism, leads a nationwide effort to extract pennies from the hungry so as to feed crumbs to the starving. To farmers, Republican relief through the Farm Board has meant decreased prices for products on which speculators later reap high profits, while through the Farm Loan Banks it has meant an increase in farmers' debts and a bumper crop of mortgage foreclosures. The "twelve Des Moines points" are merely warmed over dishes empty of nourishment for the poor farmer. The latter can get no better help from the administration than the cynical advice that, since he cannot sell his crops, he burn one-third of them. The Administration "relieves" professional groups by inviting them to compete for manual labor jobs, already insufficient for the population, at starvation wages.

All the Administration's financial "relief" measures have been devised by financiers for relief of financiers, and financiers have carried them out. For twelve years, a group of millionaires ornamented every Republican cabinet. Of the twelve members of the Young Committee set up by the Federal Reserve Bank to control credit, eleven were identified with the House of Morgan; most Reconstruction Finance Corporation directors belong to the financial oligarchy. Republican tax policy has protected high, and squeezed low income groups, partly by refusing to make the rich pay higher income taxes and by sales and other direct taxes bearing most heavily on the poorest elements of the population. Public works, which might temporarily somewhat mitigate unemployment—as Hoover stated when he was a Cabinet officer—have been cut.

Unwilling or unable to relieve the mass of the population, the Administration turns to magic. To a nation plunged into crisis by individualist economy, it prescribes "rugged individualism". Almost daily it announces the "return of prosperity." It floods us with slogans ("Business IS Better", "Keep Smiling", etc.) "to induce prosperity by psychological action". Eating a hair of a dog that bit him and mumbling incantations are, perhaps, creditable performances in a jungle savage; their practice by the Administration disqualifies it as a responsible element in modern civilization. In short, Republican economics maintains all prerogatives of financial and industrial interests by shifting the costs of the crisis onto those least able to bear them.

## HOOVER'S FOREIGN POLICY

Republicans have abandoned the 1920 pretense of forbidding the tides of international affairs from washing our shores. They now argue that the crisis began abroad, as though their Government had not played a major role in world economic and political affairs, as though Republican Presidents had not sent representatives to every important international congress, and had not employed armed forces to carry out their foreign policy. What has this policy been?

The Government has continued imperialist aggression in Latin America, supported the bloody rule of Machado in Cuba and Gomez in Venezuela, and refused independence to the Filipinos. It has blocked the Chinese road to freedom from foreign domination, helped crush the German masses with war debts, and through financial pressure, taken the initiative in setting up the MacDonald-Tory reaction in Great Britain. It has introduced reactionary immigration laws and, while denouncing other countries for raising tariffs, has utilized tariffs in a sweeping commercial war. While dealing in comity with Italy, Hungary and other Fascist-ruled lands, as well as with the Junker von Papen, perpetrator of crimes against the workers and peasants, it has obstructed Socialist construction in the Soviet Union, denying recognition to and participating in a crusade of slander against the Soviets. In general, it has helped perpetuate the system built upon the Versailles Treaty, the oppression of colonial countries, the isolation of the Soviet Union, and the alternation of agreements to loot, and wars for loot, among imperialist powers.

The culmination of this policy is preparation for war. The Administration talks disarmament while expending huge sums on new chemical and bacteriological poisons and war machines. A few weeks ago, Hoover's army air chief demanded increased armament for war against Japan. Espionage goes forward in Japan, the Soviet Union and elsewhere. A skeleton structure for military and industrial mobilization is ready. The Administration has assembled timber enough for a conflagration more horrible than that of 1914-18.

## TEAR GAS AND BAYONETS

For three years the growth of protest among our population has been steady and strong. Mr. Hoover's disastrous attempts at healing by faith and statistical falsification have latterly been abandoned for more

realistic measures. The administration's final answer to the bonus marchers was not relief but tear gas and bayonets. Both before and after Mr. Hoover provided this instructive example, local and state authorities have given a similar answer to striking workmen and the starving unemployed. Increasingly official violence is employed to break strikes, destroy unions, scatter political opposition, and gag professional groups competent to formulate criticism. The Republican Party, the party of Lincoln has of course utterly failed to oppose Jim-Crowism and Negro peonage in the South and hence bears its share of responsibility for recent outbursts of mob violence against Negroes, such as the Scottsboro case. The administration has, on the flimsiest pretense deported foreign-born workers to foreign countries where jail or the axe awaited them. It has sanctioned the Dies Bill to revive the heresy-hunts of A. Mitchell Palmer. Its Department of police has scattered its *agents provocateurs* among all militant groups that oppose its policies.

## THE OFFICIAL ENEMIES OF CULTURE

We who share in the task of crystalizing, disseminating and perpetuating American culture are deeply concerned about the effect of the Republican Administration on our culture. What has it been?

All the way from Ballinger to Sam Koenig and James J. Davis, through Harding, Newberry, Fall, Daugherty, Forbes, Hays, Stephenson, the Ohio Gang and the Little Green House on K Street, Republican leaders and organizations have wallowed in speculation, embezzlement, graft and bribery. The Republican standard-bearers, Coolidge and Hoover, sat quietly in a Cabinet which systematically looted "public" property. A stench still rises in Washington and elsewhere from many a half-revealed swamp of corruption. The marriage of highly placed speculators with a vicious underworld of bootleggers and bandits has brought forth a degenerate spawn that rots the fibre of our culture, and stultifies large sections of our people.

The establishment of political censorship has led to cultural censorship. By its control over radio broadcasting, newspaper and magazine mailing privileges, and subsidies for educational institutions, the Administration has fostered reactionary propaganda and destroyed free speech and thought. It has called upon scientists in government services to stultify themselves by manufacturing lies in support of Administration propaganda. Pressed for money, it has not preferred to

increase taxes on great wealth or cut high official salaries and military expenditures, but rather to cut sums destined for cultural activities. As though such actions were not enough, Hoover refuses in a bullying manner to receive or converse with a delegation of leading American writers; Secretary of Labor Doak persecutes foreign students; Secretary of the Interior Wilbur jubilates because the crisis has hobbled organized child care and training. In a hundred ways the Administration has shown that from top to bottom it is indifferent to the fate of our culture, contemptuous of its protagonists, and prepared at every moment to degrade it or stamp it out rather than sacrifice the slightest political advantage.

In short, the Republican Party, devoted to the interests of a ruling oligarchy of bankers and industrialists, is an enemy of the masses of our people, of workers, farmers and professional groups, and the organizer of their material and cultural poverty and decay.

#### THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY

Are there any real differences between the parties? Certainly there is a difference of language. Franklin D. Roosevelt purveys a mixtum compositum of Populist leavings, "cheap money" quackery, municipal-ownership platitudes, pious welfarism, and stale dregs of economic liberalism, in a language sometimes heated enough to invite the Republican charge that he and his party are "dangerously radical". An examination of the position and records of the Democratic Party and its candidates reveals that this is an unjustified charge. The Republican Party deals with the crisis by shifting its burdens to the masses of our people and defending the prerogatives of financiers and industrialists. The Democratic Party does not propose to do otherwise. For example, its program of nationalizing railroads is not one of benefiting the masses of the people but a proposal to purchase railroad stock at rates above the market value. It is as bold a plan to use money squeezed from the whole population for relief of the rich as Republicans have ever conceived. The rest of Democratic economics, insofar as it is concrete at all, is of the same character.

On foreign questions there is no serious divergence from Republican policy. Little is heard about the League of Nations, but there would be no gain for the mass of our people if a Democratic Administration sent official delegates to replace Republican "unofficial observers" at League meetings: the cooperation or struggle between American and

other imperial interests would be the business of those meetings just as before. As for problems centering in Latin America, China, Germany, Italy, Japan and the Soviet Union, not a word comes from Democrats to suggest that they sponsor a new policy. On the question of war, Democrats are good Republicans, perhaps the most active naval expansionist being an important Democratic Congressman.

On the question of civil rights there is no serious difference between the two parties. Roosevelt, looking to the white rulers of the South for support, utters no word of protest against even so flagrant an example of legal lynching as that perpetrated by Democratic police, prosecutors and judges in Scottsboro, Alabama. New York State troopers commanded by him as Governor join police under Republican command in the national campaign of terror against any protest from the mass of the people.

The Democratic stand on prohibition is somewhat less vague than the Republican. What either would or could do in the matter is uncertain, for both are divided between wets and drys. But what if the Democrats would modify and the Republicans would not? Is this not a Hobson's choice, between the vice bred in the illicit liquor trade under Federal Republican rule and the old vice that would return, bred by the alliance of urban Democrats and liquor interests? Above all, it is essential to note that however the parties may differ on prohibition, the question is insignificant in a time of world crisis; beer will not solve that crisis.

In the cultural field we find no significant difference between the two parties. Moral decay is as much the blood and bone of the Democratic as of the Republican Party. The oil of Teapot Dome smeared both, the division of political loot in New York City is scrupulously bipartisan. Democratic state administrations have censored and suppressed cultural activities, fostered reactionary propaganda by use of public power, and poured out money on their own behalf and that of the interests they serve while making "economies" at the expense of educational and cultural enterprises.

It cannot be overlooked that during these twelve years Democrats have dominated many states, some continuously, and have for the past year controlled the House of Congress. They have always used their share of power like the Republicans, and on many basic economic questions simply fell in line behind Hoover. The personal records of the Democratic candidates resemble those of the staunchest Republicans.

Roosevelt, a wealthy New Yorker, reached his present eminence through political deals with Tammany Hall, whose good friend he remains in spite of the dust kicked up at Albany. John Nance Garner, Texas banker, exploiter of Negro and white poor farmers and workers, is a representative of one of the most brutal traditions in American life.

#### ARE THERE TWO PARTIES OR ONLY ONE?

No, the rock-ribbed Republican is not to be taken seriously when he calls the Democrats radical. Such a conservative as Nicholas Murray Butler, such a careful liberal as John Dewey, have repeatedly affirmed that there is no difference between the two parties. Indeed, when that corporate crook, Samuel Insull, filled the war-chests of both; when Hoover, seeking a conservative to head the Reconstruction Finance Corporation, turns to an Ohio Democrat; when New York City political spoils are neatly divided between Republican Sam Hofstadter and the Tammany Steuer family; when Republican Senators support a Democratic presidential ticket without leaving their party, and vice versa—at such times one wonders are there two parties here or only one?

In any case, there is little difference, and what there is, is verbal. Republican pretense that it monopolizes the field of serving the great financial and industrial interests of the country is unfounded. Frank Hague, Mayor of Jersey City and a member of the National Democratic Committee, is justified in proclaiming as he did last month that despite Roosevelt's campaign demagogic "the Democratic Party is the party for the interests." Those great Democrats, Owen D. Young and John J. Raskob, heartily agree with Hague. It is the logical alternative of the Republican Party, just as Tweedlebum is the logical alternative of Tweedledee—for the same job. It is the demagogic face of Republicanism, and it too is the creature of the privileged few, the enemy of the material and cultural well-being of the mass of our people, of industrial workers, farmers and professionals.

#### TOWARD A NEW SOCIETY

The spectacle of catastrophic economic collapse—the magnificent and recurrent capitalist spectacle of starvation in the midst of plenty—presents the issue of social reorganization as the major issue in this campaign. The history of capitalism shows that crises and depressions are inevitable under the system of production for profit, of money

making, and that the development of capitalism aggravates their violence. This depression, moreover, is no mere dip in the business cycle; it is a manifestation of the general crisis and collapse of capitalism. Even capitalist economists admit that capitalism cannot survive "as is".

Fundamental social reorganization must eliminate the basic causes of cyclical fluctuations and depressions—production for profit, speculation, the anarchy of production, the unequal distribution of income which creates a disparity between production and consumption, the exploitation of the working class. Only Socialism can eliminate the exploitation and misery which prevail under capitalism.

Social ownership and management of the means of production and distribution become the starting point of social reorganization, economic and cultural. Industry ceases being a means of exploitation, of the accumulation of profits and fortunes; it ceases being the master of life and becomes the server of life. Socialist industry is planned, deliberately, purposefully, unhampered by predatory capitalist interests—there can be neither the poverty which prevails under capitalism even in the most prosperous times nor the catastrophe and aggravated mass misery of depression. Industry becomes the creative technical problem of calculating social needs and mobilizing and reorganizing the necessary labor, machinery and raw materials.

#### THE PROFESSIONAL CLASSES WILL BE LIBERATED

Under Socialism science and technology are freed from their dependence upon private profit; their scope and social application are enormously increased. The professional workers, whom capitalism either exploits or forces to become exploiters, are liberated to perform freely and creatively their particular craft function—the engineer need consider only the efficiency of his work, the economist and statistician can purposefully plan the organization, management and social objectives of industry, the architect is released from profit and speculative motives and may express his finest aspirations in buildings of social utility and beauty, the physician becomes the unfettered organizer of social preventive medicine, the teacher, writer, and artist fashion the creative ideology of a new world and a new culture.

It is an ideal worth fighting for, and it is a practical and realizable ideal, as is being proved in the Soviet Union. It would, moreover, be much easier to build Socialism in the United States than in Russia

because of the infinitely higher development of our technology and our means of production and distribution.

#### THREE FALSE ROADS OUT OF THE CRISIS

The great issue of fundamental social reorganization is completely ignored by the two major parties. There are, however, three groups which recognize and distort the issue—the Fascists, the liberal intellectuals and the Socialist Party.

#### FASCISM

American Fascism is still insignificant, although its potential threat is great. But Fascism means social reaction and stagnation, not social reorganization. Fascism is the final resort of capitalism desperately determined to preserve its domination and prevent its own collapse.

It has been clearly demonstrated that Fascism means preservation of the dictatorship of capital under new forms, the subjection of the workers and crushing of the labor movement, the degradation of the professional groups. We know from the experience in Italy and Germany that Fascism represents the most reactionary national, imperialist and cultural ideals, and lets loose the most barbarous prejudices and appetites. We know that in Italy under the Fascist dictatorship there is economic stagnation and cultural decay, in contrast with the new world and the new culture being created in the Soviet Union. Fascism means the collapse of civilization, a new Dark Ages. It is the death rattle of decaying capitalism.

#### ECONOMIC PLANNING

The liberal intellectuals also base their program upon decaying capitalism, which they wish to revitalize by means of national economic planning. They admit the success of planning in the Soviet Union, but they evade the fundamental issue: Soviet planning is *Socialist* planning, possible and successful *only* because the capitalists have been deprived of their power, and industry is socially owned and managed. The liberal intellectuals wish to resort to planning merely to patch up capitalism, not as an element in the creation of a new world and a new culture.

In its larger objectives—the elimination of cyclical fluctuations and depressions—national economic planning is necessarily wrecked by the capitalist system of profit, speculation and competition, and by the

unequal distribution of income which creates a disparity between production and consumption—the fundamental cause of cyclical disturbances. National economic planning in various forms has been practiced in Germany, Italy, France and England, yet these countries are also in the midst of depression, unemployment and starvation.

The liberals assume that capitalism can organize itself socially. But capitalism has been organizing itself for years—trusts, cartels, state capitalism, national planning—and the capitalist world is now in the midst of the most catastrophic depression in history. In fact, capitalist "organization" aggravates and prolongs the depression, as it prevents the free play of economic forces—the "blood letting" of liquidation—which is the only method capitalism knows of restoring "prosperity." In its limited (and practical) objectives, national economic planning strengthens state capitalism, which constitutes the economic aspect of the Fascist dictatorship.

#### THE AMERICAN SOCIALIST PARTY

The Socialist Party also believes in national economic planning under capitalism. It merely insists that the planning must be done by Socialist politicians and must include a measure of government ownership. They have faith that planning is possible under capitalism; in fact the German Socialists insist that capitalism is becoming "organized", capable of preventing crises and depressions! The Socialists do not believe that the overthrow of capitalism is the primary essential for successful economic planning, and in this sense their proposals are not much different from those of the liberal intellectuals.

Despite its pretensions the Socialist Party is only a party of "progressivism" and "good government", of mere reformism which builds up state capitalism, and thus strengthens the capitalist state and potential Fascism. Norman Thomas has vague aspirations for the "good life", but his socialism is practically non-existent (as is admitted even by many members of his own party). "Good government" may help the tax-payer, but it cannot help industrial and professional workers tormented by unemployment, wage-cuts and exploitation. What benefits can these expect to gain from the cry of Norman Thomas and his party in New York City to "clear the Tammany rascals out"?

In the present campaign the Socialist leaders are considered safe and sane by the capitalist press, which is giving the Socialist candidates, particularly Norman Thomas, an unprecedented amount of fa-

favorable publicity. The ultimate purpose of these maneuvers is to prevent the unemployed and dispossessed from voting Communist and initiating a real struggle against capitalism. A more immediate purpose of the Republican Party is to switch the "protest" votes to Norman Thomas and thereby help to re-elect Hoover. The capitalists may dislike Socialists but they do not fear them; the capitalists make use of the Socialists wherever necessary—to preserve capitalism in Germany, to bolster capitalism and empire in Great Britain, to build capitalism in Spain, to head off the Communists in the United States. This is not what the Socialist Party members and voters may want, but it is what they get from the Socialist policy and leaders.

#### A PARTY OF INACTION

The Socialist Party leaders do not stress the need of a recreated labor movement; wherever they are in power in the unions they pursue a policy identical in general with that of William Green and Matthew Woll and the other misleaders of labor. They do not emphasize industrial unionism and the organization of the unorganized workers, without which there can be no militant labor movement in the United States. What the Socialists expect primarily from the unions is that they vote the Socialist ticket, in return for which the union leaders will be allowed to misgovern the unions in peace. Nor is the Socialist Party waging an aggressive campaign in favor of economic and social equality for the Negro; in fact the party maintains "Jim Crow" locals down South. The Socialist Party asks for votes, playing practical politics; but it evades all real struggle and enlightenment on fundamental issues.

The Socialist Party does not participate actively as a party in the vital every-day struggles—the struggle of the workers against wage cuts, the demonstrations of the unemployed for relief and unemployment insurance and their resistance to evictions, the defense of political prisoners, the fight of the Negro against racial discrimination and lynching, the struggle of professional groups to formulate their grievances. When individual Socialists engage in these struggles, they do so either under Communist leadership or else by adopting Communist tactics—and they are not encouraged by the leaders of their own party. The aim of the Socialist Party is not to fight but to get votes and elect its candidates to office.

Votes—these are all it asks of the professional groups, but it makes no attempt to understand the problems and social functions of the

professionals. Nor does the Socialist Party wage a struggle on the cultural front. It almost completely ignores cultural problems. It ignores the fact that the Socialist revolution is also and necessarily a cultural revolution.

The Socialist Party claims that it is against imperialist war. But the party does not wage an aggressive campaign against war. The experience of history, moreover, proves that Socialist words are not to be trusted. The European Socialists, with the exception of the left wing groups which later became the basis of the Communist International, supported the imperialist war of 1914-1918. The American Socialist Party, under pressure of the left wing which two years later seceded and formed the Communist Party, adopted a resolution against American participation in the war, but the resolution was largely ignored by the leaders. Two months after his "anti-war" campaign in New York City, Morris Hillquit abandoned the implications of the party resolution against the war when he said: "If I had believed that our participation would shorten the world war and force a better, more democratic and more durable peace, *I should have favored the measure*, regardless of the cost and sacrifices to America." (*New Republic*, December 1, 1917.) The party's representative in Congress and its representatives in the New York City Board of Aldermen also largely ignored the anti-war resolution. Moreover, Victor L. Berger and his paper, the *Milwaukee Leader*, had for years urged the American conquest and annexation of Mexico. In a series of articles during 1915 the *Leader* argued that it was a "perfervid illusion" to hope that "American intervention can and must be prevented", and continued: "If Mexico is annexed, the Mexican people will lose their national independence, but they gain admission to the American labor movement and the American Socialist Party." Victor Berger was not expelled, he was not even disciplined. Nor is the Socialist Party actively engaged in the struggle against capitalist intervention in the Soviet Union, while Socialist enmity against the world's first proletarian republic encourages the hopes of the interventionist forces.

Norman Thomas stresses the danger of an American Fascism. But his own party is indirectly helping Fascism by its insistence on democracy, evading the issue of militant organization and struggle. To insist on democracy as the answer to Fascism is to oppose air to bullets, for Fascism repudiates democracy and develops out of bourgeois democracy. In Germany, for example, the Fascist danger has been enor-

mously aggravated by the policy of the German Socialist leaders: The Socialist government saved democracy against the Communist "menace" and the result was—the nationalist reactionary government of Hindenburg and Von Papen and the growth of the Fascist danger.

The Socialist Party claims that it works for Socialism. But the unalterable granite facts are:

—wherever the Socialists have had the power they have rejected the task of building Socialism.

—only in the Soviet Union, under the leadership of the Communists, is Socialism being built up.

And what is the Socialist attitude to the Soviet Union? It is in large part an attitude of hostility, of hatred, of hope that the great endeavor may collapse. European Socialists are among the most active forces of the intervention movement.

In America the Socialist Party is two-faced on the great issue of Socialism in the Soviet Union. One group is openly hostile, joining hands with the most venomous European Socialist enemies of the Soviet Union. Another group has words of seeming praise, they say there are many good things about the Socialist "experiment" in the Soviet Union, but that "we" must do it "differently". Thus they try to "cash in" on the great achievements of the Soviet Union while refusing to organize the struggle for Socialism in the United States.

By its record in Germany, France, Spain, England and in Russia during the Revolution, the Socialist Party has proved itself to be a bulwark of the capitalist system. Is it any different in this country? American Socialists sometimes say, "We are not responsible for what Socialists do in Europe", but that is an evasion. The party is the same all over the world, a member of the Second International, which everywhere is a bulwark of capitalism; in America it has had little political power and therefore has not exposed itself completely; but the Socialists of Milwaukee, Allentown, New York, Schenectady and Reading have acted exactly like their European brethren.

The Socialists are the third party of capitalism.

#### THE COMMUNIST PARTY

The Communist Party stands for a Socialism of deeds, not of words. It appeals for the support of the American working classes, not like the Socialist Party on the basis of broken and unfulfilled promises, but

sary condition for all equality is social equality and that social equality can only be won by the joint struggle of white and Negro workers against their common oppressors. It breaks with the policy of empty promises, deceit and betrayal which has characterized the attitudes of the Republican, Democratic and Socialist Parties towards the Negro masses. It has sealed its sincerity in the struggle for the liberation of the Negroes with the blood of its organizers—heroic white and colored workers who have fallen victims of the lynch terrorism of the Southern landlords and the Northern capitalists.

5. The Communist Party appeals for a united front *against capitalist terror; against all forms of suppression of the political rights of the workers.* The more the crisis eats its way into the vitals of capitalist society, the more ruthlessly does the capitalist class set itself to destroy all militant workers' organizations. It does not hesitate to sweep aside its own "sacred" constitutional guarantees of freedom of speech and assembly and at the same time accuses Communists of attempting to undermine constitutional rights. It has met peaceful demonstrations for bread with bullets. It has resorted to the crudest frame-ups in order to railroad working-class leaders to jail. As the crisis sharpens, the campaign of injunctions, deportations and violence threatens to develop into an organized war against radical trade unions, unemployed councils and workers' defense organizations. The Communist Party alone calls upon the working class for action to meet capitalist class terror.

6. The Communist Party appeals for a united front *against imperialist war; for the defense of the Chinese people and of the Soviet Union.* Capitalism breeds war as inevitably as it breeds crisis. The quest for profits leads to the search for foreign markets—the search for foreign markets, to struggle with suppressed nationalities and rival capitalist groups. War is welcomed by the capitalist class as a method of disposing of surplus commodities and surplus wage workers. War under modern conditions of technology and science recognizes no distinction between the front and the rear, between combatant and non-combatant. It means pitting the workers of one country against the workers of another in order to call them off from the war of class against class. At the present moment imperialist war is raging in China; tomorrow world capitalism is prepared to launch its holy crusade against the Soviet Union. The Communist Party demands an open war against capitalist war. It rallies the workers in munition factories and on the sea-front to strike against shipping war materials. It calls upon the

working class to be prepared to transform the coming imperialist war against mythical enemies without into a revolutionary war against the real class enemy within.

#### THE COMMUNIST ROAD TO A NEW SOCIETY

What is the relationship between these immediate demands and the revolutionary goal of Communism? It does not require much reflection to see that they are integrally connected. The immediate demands of the Communist Party differ from those of the reformist parties in that they are not proposed as sops to be thrown to discontented workers and farmers in order to prevent revolution. They are the first steps, under existing conditions, toward the overthrow of capitalism. Each demand furnishes the basis for a broad mass organization and mass activity.

The so-called reform plans in the election platforms of other parties call for the perpetuation of the capitalist system under the guise of patching up either the currency system or the tariff or the farm policy. Their voice of protest against the abuses of capitalism is merely the swan song of the middle classes which the processes of centralization of industry and concentration of wealth have put on the auction-block. Those parties of reform first confuse the minds of the workers with radical words and then betray them by their official acts. They no more can prevent wage cuts, unemployment and war than their soup kitchens can wipe out want.

The Communist Party does not sit back in sectarian blindness waiting for Communism to come by gentle inevitability in the distant future. It organizes the workers in the factories and mines, in offices and schools, in the city and country, in the army and navy, to fight for their rights, and to resist the attempt of the capitalists to make the masses shoulder the burdens of the world crisis.

#### WHY VOTE COMMUNIST

Why vote for the Communist Party? Because it offers the only practicable solution of the crisis—a workers' and farmers' government. Because it leads in the attack on the capitalist class and its tool, the capitalist state. *Because it is the only organization which can now wring genuine concessions from the ruling classes.*

No ruling class ever surrenders voluntarily a morsel of its power. It must be forced by the threat of the growing power of a militant revolutionary organization to do so. That is why those who are not

prepared at the present moment to accept the full revolutionary program of the Communist Party should support it in the coming election. For only if the Communist Party rolls up a strong vote can the capitalist be frightened into acceding to its immediate demands. The capitalist class does not fear the Socialist Party, which it praises for moderation and sweet reasonableness. It fears and hates the Communist Party because it knows it really means to work towards a Socialist State.

The history of the class struggle in America since 1929 proves that it has been the revolutionary demands of the Communist Party which have forced the national and local governments to recognize unemployment and at least make gestures at relief. It was only after March 6, 1930, when Communist demonstrations against unemployment had been broken up throughout the country, and Wm. Z. Foster served six months in prison after his arrest for leading the demonstration, that the country awoke to the effects of the collapse of the previous fall. In New York it was only after a deputation of unemployed under Communist leadership had been clubbed by the police, that the Board of Estimate was compelled to make grants for relief. In St. Louis it required a march on city hall by thousands of workers under Communist leadership before the municipal government restored hungry families to the relief rolls. Even where the Communist Party fails to attain its immediate objective, its failure, by bringing into action great masses with potential revolutionary capacities, accomplishes more for the workers than the successes of the capitalist parties.

A vote for any party but the Communist Party is worse than a wasted vote. It is a vote for the class enemies of the workers. A vote for hunger, war, unemployment; for the thousand-fold material and spiritual oppressions which flow from capitalism. A vote for the Communist Party is not a wasted vote. It is an effective protest against a system which permits the necessities of life to be destroyed rather than let them be consumed by those who cannot pay for them.

Why should intellectual workers be loyal to the ruling class which frustrates them, stultifies them, patronizes them, makes their work ridiculous, and now starves them? There are teachers on the bread lines, engineers patching the sheet-iron shacks in the "Hooversvilles," musicians fiddling in the "jungles." The professionals are not yet starving as the proletariat is starving. But since 1929 there reigns a permanent superfluity in the ranks of the professional groups. We "in-

tellectuals," like the workers, find ourselves superfluous. Is that because there is too much civilization, too much "culture"? No, it is because there is not enough.

We, too, the intellectual workers, are of the oppressed, and until we shake off the servile habit of that oppression we shall build blindly and badly, to the lunatic specifications of ignorance and greed. If we are capable of building a civilization, surely it is time for us to begin; time for us to assert our function, our responsibility; time for us to renew the pact of comradeship with the struggling masses, trapped by the failure of leadership in the blind miseries of a crumbling madhouse. In a few years dwindling opportunities for employment brought on by progressive rationalization of industry, capitalist economies in the social services of government and the whole anarchistic system of education which prevails under capitalism—will mean the pauperization of the most highly creative groups in society.

What is worse, the spiritual degradation which every independent intellectual or professional worker suffers when false money-standards are applied to his creative craft, will grow deeper. Today it is difficult for the professional conscientiously to perform his work in the face of demands made by his employers—that he use his art, his science, his skill for ends that are foreign to his professional activity. Tomorrow it will be impossible for the intellectual to function as a free personality under the pressure of vocational unemployment and the necessity of serving those upon whom he is dependent.

It is important that the professional workers realize that they do not constitute an independent economic class in society. They can neither remain neutral in the struggle between capitalism and Communism nor can they by their own independent action effect any social change. Their choice is between serving either as the cultural lieutenants of the capitalist class or as allies and fellow travelers of the working class. That for them is the historic issue which cannot be straddled by the multiform varieties of personal escape or settled by flying to the vantage points of above-the-battle moralities.

The struggle for the emancipation of society from the blight of capitalism is not only an economic question, it is a cultural question as well. Both in theory and in practice, capitalism is hostile to the genuine culture of the past and present and bitterly opposed to the new cultural tendencies which have grown out of the epic of working class struggle for a new society. "The bourgeoisie has robbed of their haloes various

occupations hitherto regarded with awe and veneration. Doctor, lawyer, priest, poet and scientist have become its wage-laborers... it has left no other bond between man and man... but crude self-interest and unfeeling 'cash payment.'" No genuine culture can thrive in a society in which malnutrition is a natural cause of death, the exploitation of man by man the natural cause of wealth, and foreign war and domestic terror the natural means of retaining political power. It is capitalism which is destructive of all culture and Communism which desires to save civilization and its cultural heritage from the abyss to which the world crisis is driving it.

The intellectual worker is confronted on all sides by the massed unity of capitalism—chaotic and benighted in itself, yet organized enough when it works with its pawns—enforcing its own needs, confining them to its own limited and sterilizing program. How long will he suffocate within this narrow house? When will he attempt to break through this closed circle by alliance with the only militant force which seeks renovation?

In the interests of a truly human society in which all forms of exploitation have been abolished; in behalf of a new cultural renaissance which will produce integrated, creative personalities, we call upon all men and women—especially workers in the professions and the arts—to join in the revolutionary struggle against capitalism under the leadership of the Communist Party.

*Vote Communist—For Foster and Ford—on November 8.*

## ORIGIN OF THIS PAMPHLET

In September, 1932, a group of over fifty American writers, painters, teachers and other professional workers declared their support of Foster and Ford and the Communist ticket in the 1932 national election. The following statement was given to the press:

"We are convinced that both the Republican and Democratic parties represent the interests of the moneyed classes, that is, of the big manufacturers, capitalists and bankers, and not the interests of the people at large; that there is no way out of the crisis through either of them. Both parties are hopelessly corrupt, and both will try to save the profits of the rich at the expense of the rest of the population.

"The Socialists aim, in theory, to abolish the present system, but are doing nothing to organize a labor movement by which this may be accomplished. They have no convincing plan. And the example of the British and German Socialists is far from reassuring. In Great Britain and Germany, the Socialists went over to the side of the rich as soon as the capitalist state seemed in danger.

"We believe that the only effective way to protest against the chaos, the appalling wastefulness, and the indescribable misery inherent in the present economic system is to vote for the Communist candidates.

"The Communist Party alone is working to educate and organize the classes dispossessed by the present system, so as to make them an efficient instrument for establishing a new society based on equal opportunity to work, equitable distribution of income, and ownership by the people of the national resources.

"We therefore pledge our support in the national elections to the Communist Party and its candidates, William Z. Foster and James W. Ford, and call upon all educators, writers, engineers, social workers, artists, architects and intellectuals in general to join

us in this move and form 'Foster and Ford' Committees throughout the country."

In October this group was organized as The League of Professional Groups for Foster and Ford. An editorial committee was appointed and instructed to expand the original statement into a 10,000 word "Open Letter," and publish it as an election pamphlet. This pamphlet is now issued under the title of "Culture and the Crisis."

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